

AD-A266 797



(Unclassified Document)

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, RI

THE CHALLENGE TO
U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND STRATEGY
IN THE PACIFIC RIM

by

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The comments contained within are a reflection of my personal views and conclusions. They do not reflect or are endorsed by the Naval War College or any Department of Defense branch.

Signature: _____

16 May 1993

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Approved for public release:
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98 7 09 014

93-15630

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.	
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE		5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) C	7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841		9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.
		TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) THE CHALLENGE TO U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND STRATEGY IN THE PACIFIC RIM (U)			
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) CDR G.K. STAIR, JR., USN			
13a. TYPE OF REPORT FINAL	13b. TIME COVERED FROM TO	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 18 JUNE 93	15. PAGE COUNT 37
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.			
17. COSATI CODES		18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	CHALLENGE TO U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND STRATEGY	
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)			
<p>The challenge to U.S. Pacific Command Strategy in the Pacific Rim looks at the uncertainties affecting U.S. Strategy in the Pacific Rim, provides an assessment of current and future concerns, and evaluates current PACOM strategy. The paper finds that the lack of an overall national strategy toward the Pacific Rim will only detract from future effectiveness of military force as a tool of statecraft. The paper concludes with several recommendations on how the U.S. can better define its objectives in the region, and thus empower and facilitate military initiatives in theater.</p>			
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <i>Unclassified</i>	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT		22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 841-3414	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL C

ABSTRACT

This study examines the uncertainties affecting U.S. strategy in the Pacific Rim region, evaluates current PACOM strategy there, and provides an assessment of current and future concerns. The study finds that the lack of an overall national strategy toward the Pacific Rim only detracts from the future effectiveness of military forces as a tool of statecraft. The study concludes with several recommendations on how the U.S. can better define its objectives in the region, and thus empower and facilitate military initiatives in theater.

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 8

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
PART ONE.....	5
PART TWO.....	14
CONCLUSION.....	26
ENDNOTES.....	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	31

INTRODUCTION

The end of the cold war bipolar alignment has been both a luxury and a challenge for the United States. It is a luxury because the United States is freed from "the imperatives of superpower rivalry" and no longer has "to support rightist regimes simply because they have strong anti-communist credentials."¹ It is a challenge because now the United States will have to be more observant of regional interests and needs if it hopes to influence events in accordance with its own national interests. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Pacific Rim.

Prospects for enduring peace and prosperity in the Pacific Rim have never been greater, but events within the region must be carefully managed and influenced for both to occur. It is logical to ask why the United States should even bother to remain engaged, but the answer is very simple. The United States is a Pacific power; it is an economic power; the Asia-Pacific nations are a marketplace; we are increasingly becoming tied to the Pacific Rim through continued investment, trade and immigration; and the security of these nations is in keeping with overall U.S. national interests and objectives.

These national interests and objectives focus on the survival of the United States as a free and independent nation, and the protection of its fundamentals values, institutions, and people; global and regional stability which encourages peaceful change and progress; open, democratic and representative political systems worldwide; an open international trading and economic system which

benefits all participants; and an enduring faith in America, that it can and will lead in a collective response to the world's crises.²

The Clinton administration has yet to articulate specific guidance for relations within the Pacific region, but former Secretary of State Baker established three pillars that remain the foundation for pursuing these interests within the Pacific Rim. First, developing a framework "for economic integration that will support an open global trading system in order to sustain the region's economic dynamism and avoid regional economic fragmentation"; second, fostering trends "toward democratization so as to deepen the shared values that will reinforce a sense of community, enhance economic vitality and minimize prospects for dictatorial adventures"; and, third, defining a "defense structure for the Asia-Pacific theater that reflects the region's diverse security concerns and mitigates intra-regional fears and suspicions."³

Management of these events is harder than establishing the pillars by which to exercise policy. There are many diverse and competing issues around which the United States will have to "navigate." Trade and security in the past have been the linchpins of U.S. involvement, but the demise of the Soviet Union has diffused the security issue and now perceived economic competition and continuing trade deficits with Japan dominate the spotlight. This is unfortunate because they only obfuscate true regional issues and impede development of a patient and long range strategy.

What follows is a review of these issues, as well as future uncertainties and the challenge to the Pacific Command in militarily influencing and preparing for them. An underlying premise to be discussed later is the United States has been "Eurocentric" in its policy since World War II, and despite two wars in the Pacific theater there has been no overall coherent policy other than support of containment to focus U.S. interests in this region. This is particularly true in the post Cold War era. As a result, the Defense Department finds itself tacitly an originator as well as executor of policy within the Pacific Rim.

Part One focuses on issues within the Pacific Rim itself, because without a review of these issues one cannot speak to the concerns and nuances within which United States initiatives must interact. While there are legitimate security concerns--not only among Pacific Rim nations but also lingering U.S. commitments to the security of South Korea and Japan--the foundation of daily activity is the economic interdependence and growth that is prevalent throughout much of the region. This, then, is the paradoxical challenge to U.S. military policy within the region: as threats subside and military presence appears no longer needed, U.S. military disengagement becomes difficult because its presence has provided--and still provides--the regional stability that fosters growth. Yet as military power evolves into a diplomatic tool to sustain the regional status quo, it becomes increasingly difficult to establish domestic concurrence for military engagement without a clear-cut military threat--as all unified commanders have

discovered--especially if the military commander and his immediate superiors are the few focusing on an overall regional approach. This and the implications for future Pacific Command strategy are the subjects for Part Two.

PART ONE

It is best to approach the Pacific Rim as three subregions: Japan, the Koreas, and China as one; Indochina--Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos--as another; and the Association of Southeast Asian (ASEAN) Nations--Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines--with Taiwan and Hong Kong as the third. Nothing ever fits together neatly, because Russia, Australia, New Zealand, and Burma also play in this region, but it is to the first and third categories to which this discussion is oriented, and to the remainder as appropriate.

The common denominator for the majority of these nations, despite numerous diversities among the subregions, is the United States. In the Northeast the United States remains the guarantor of South Korean freedom, and the U.S. and Japan share, among other things, the largest amount of trade ever recorded between two nations. In the south, the security umbrella provided by regional U.S. military presence contributed significantly to unprecedented economic development and growth by maintaining a balance against external threats while allowing respective nations to concentrate on internal matters such as regime legitimacy and integration of diverse ethnic groups.⁴ U.S. markets sustained that growth by absorbing 23 percent of all East Asian exports.⁵ Whereas a common threat, homogenous domestic populations and post war linkages allowed closer U.S. ties and bilateral agreements with South Korea and Japan, however, the ASEAN nations have been slow to develop a regional identification due to the lack of a common threat as well

as political and ethnic diversities.

The evolution of current contacts within ASEAN owe more to the "globalization of Asian economic interests and less to an emerging regional mentality." There is a noticeable lack of transnational institutions, and intragroup trade accounts for no more than 17 percent of their total external trade."⁶ While mechanisms exist for broad economic cooperation, none exist for security, in part due to diverse security concerns and the absence of a common threat. Thailand's interests, for example, are primarily continental, while Malaysia and Indonesia are maritime oriented.⁷ Thailand has ties to the U.S. as well as China. In the past both Thailand and Singapore looked to China as an ally against residual Vietnamese hegemony, while Malaysia and Indonesia viewed Chinese naval ambitions as a threat.⁸ Additionally, most ASEAN military training activities are conducted not among member nations but rather bilaterally with such extra-regional nations as Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain and the United States.

These trends are important because in July 1992 ASEAN unanimously called upon the United States to maintain a military presence in the region. Indonesia and Malaysia's endorsement is a vivid illustration of regional post cold war realities because this is the first time ever that ASEAN as a whole agreed upon U.S. military presence.⁹ It reflects consensus over an emerging threat, namely growing concern that an outside nation could fill the "vacuum" left by either a U.S. withdrawal or "overenthusiastic" drawdown. Though Japan is not currently structured for long range

power projection,¹⁰ fear and distrust of Japan's capabilities owing to World War II experiences permeate the ASEAN region. The United States is perceived as a tempering influence on resurgent Japanese ambitions, as well as potential Chinese military adventures.¹¹ Also, no one can discount the importance of U.S. markets, because U.S. protectionism would lead to a stagnation of these economies with grave ramifications for their national well-being and security.¹² Thus, despite the unanimous request, one should not lose sight of the self-interest within the area.

While no region is uniformly harmonious, there are several trends which warrant close examination. Of the "15 possible maritime boundaries in the South China Sea, 12 are in dispute," mostly caused by overlapping economic exclusion zones.¹³ China, Taiwan and Vietnam claim the Spratly Islands in their entirety while Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines claim portions. All have a representative military presence there. The Philippines disputes Malaysia's claim to Sabah; China and Vietnam both claim the Paracels; and Indonesia and Vietnam have overlapping shelf boundaries. All of these areas are astride important sea lanes, fishing zones, oil beds or mineral resources.¹⁴ This does not even include the land border disputes among Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Compounding this are increasing defense expenditures. The Asia-Pacific region accounts for over 35 percent of all major weapons imports, "more than any other region including Europe."¹⁵ Also, acute differences in regional political systems exist. Five

of the six remaining communist regimes--China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia--are located here, and all possess "disproportionately large military establishments."¹⁶ Interesting, too, is the United Nations arms register resolution adopted by a 106 to 1 vote. Designed to build confidence through the open declaration of import/export arms transactions, it is disconcerting to note four of the eight abstaining nations--China, North Korea, Burma and Singapore--are in the region.¹⁷ The Korean situation notwithstanding, these issues are particularly important when evaluating the ASEAN region given their historical disputes and lack of confidence building measures and security cooperation.

Why does ASEAN continue to arm? Modernizing aging equipment is the primary cause, but so is the need for increased capability due to the proliferation of weapons throughout the region. This leads to a concern that too abrupt a U.S. withdrawal, if it occurs, would cause these nations to take greater defense measures which would precipitate an arms race.¹⁸ Again, these nations see different threats, but on the maritime axis, in addition to Japanese expansionism, there is also China.

China's defense expenditures increased by 52 percent from 1989 to 1992, and China has increased its military budget by another 14 percent for 1993.¹⁹ Though China is currently preoccupied with internal leadership succession and economic adjustments, its military modernization and increased capabilities are particularly threatening to the ASEAN nations. China's military strategy for the immediate future has shifted away from large scale

confrontation to smaller wars of intense but limited duration. China has created a "combined naval arms" capability "specifically trained for force projection into the South China Sea."²⁰ A brigade size amphibious force as well as long range surface attack aircraft have been deployed on the island of Hainan, and in 1990 airborne troops were observed in exercises supposedly simulating the capture of a "South China Sea" island.²¹ These developments become more relevant in view of China's excursion against a Vietnamese craft in the Paracels in 1989 as well as in the Spratlys, and reasserting claims to the Spratlys in February 1992.²² One danger as ASEAN defense planners create force structures focused on combatting this aggression, however, is that they "pay insufficient attention to a ...conflict escalating out of control and involving rival states in armed confrontations they did not originally seek."²³

Northeast Asia is not immune to territorial disputes either. The Kuriles remain an obstacle to increasing ties between Japan and Russia, despite recent Japanese loan guarantees to Russia. Overlapping claims include Japan and South Korea over the Liancourt Rocks in the Sea of Japan; Japan and South Korea over North Korea's declared 50 nautical mile military zone; and China and Japan over the Diaoyutai Islands in the East China Sea.²⁴ But except for the larger scope of all issues surrounding North Korea, the situation here is more stable.

Yet positive events are occurring. The former Soviet fleet has withdrawn and arms reductions have been made along the borders of China and the former Soviet Union, China and Vietnam, and

Vietnam and Cambodia.²⁵ There have been improving relations between many nations including China and Russia, Russia and South Korea, China and South Korea (though this caused a "burp" between South Korea and Taiwan), as well as the admission of both Koreas to the United Nations. Undoubtedly these improvements have more to do with the need for investment and technology rather than empathy between nations, but they illustrate the increasing impact of economics in shaping international relations. Despite differing political regimes, Natural Economic Territories (NETs) have formed among China's Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Taiwan; the Shantung province and South Korea; and the Fujian province and Taiwan. Future NETs are expected to appear in Sakhalin, the Kuriles and Northern Japan; and Vladivostok, Nakhodka and Western Japan.²⁶ These developments cannot be understated, because it will be factors such as the dynamism of an NET and the need for western technology that will more than likely guarantee the stability of Hong Kong as it transfers to China in 1997.

It is estimated by the year 2000 70 percent of the world's population will reside in the Asian region, that they will produce 50 percent of the world's production and account for up to 70 percent of the world's trade.²⁷ The Asia-Pacific region had the highest rate of economic growth in the 1980s.²⁸ U.S. trade with the Asia-Pacific region exceeds its total trade with Europe by over 100 billion dollars. Despite historic distrust of the Japanese, Japan leads all nations in regional investments (which might also explain future fears of hegemony, although the desire for capital and jobs

helps Pacific Rim nations overcome elements of this distrust), committing over 23 billion dollars in 1989, as well as 4.3 billion in developmental aid.²⁹ The region has a promising future for continued economic growth and development.

Looking ahead, however, the region is as full of as many uncertainties as there are promises. First and foremost is North Korea. Nowhere are more troops poised for sustained conflict in a higher state of readiness. The posturing has existed for so long the world has become accustomed to it. But the status quo in the North is eroding, first from the state of the economy, second from lessening Chinese and Russian support, and finally the impending generational leadership change from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il. Since "political modernization has been completely suppressed in North Korea for such a long time," many consider the prospect of violence in the North to be very high following political succession.³⁰

Equally disturbing to the peace of the region is the proliferation of nuclear weapons. North Korea has not been cooperative with the International Atomic Energy Agency, instilling doubts of North Korean intentions. Even if peace should prevail, the possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea is so potentially destabilizing that it could stimulate a nuclear arms race by other regional powers. Not only would this be of grave concern to the world community, the reverberations throughout the Asia-Pacific region would have devastating effects on regional arms stability. North Korea's recent withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty

only exacerbates these concerns.

The futures of Russia and China as dominant regional powers are just as uncertain. Optimistically one could assume in ten years time Russia could be asserting itself again; certainly the military capabilities are there. But so is the opportunity for civil unrest since much of the infrastructure requires major revamping. For the moment Boris Yeltsin is content with establishing Russia as the "good neighbor," for Western and Asian financial assistance is essential to his and Russia's survival. Even positive developments could have unintended consequences for the U.S. Should Russia reach an agreement with Japan exchanging the Kuriles for capital, not only could it preoccupy Japan within the region and limit investment (underwriting the debt) in the United States, but, by fostering regional security, it might also erode domestic support within Japan for the continued bastioning of U.S. troops there.

China continues its four modernizations path, and although recent generational adjustments in leadership are initially encouraging, the potential for domestic instability from economic reforms will continue as long as political modernization is suppressed. China's leadership is conscious of what they perceive to be a U.S. strategy of "peaceful evolution," namely, the gradual undermining of their regime due to the influx of ideas which accompany free market economics.³¹ Reactionary policies similar to Tiananmen would be regionally destabilizing.

Other unresolved issues which create uncertainty include:

requirements for confidence building measures to preclude inadvertent conflict; increasing arms procurement, especially given the "attractiveness" of the ASEAN subregion to defense contractors and governments seeking to underwrite domestic weapons production; the flashpoint of territorial disputes; the eventual outcome of Cambodian peacekeeping efforts and Burma's military dictatorship; the transfer of Hong Kong to China and potential implications for Taiwan; expansion of China's navy into the South China Sea and possible subregionalization in ASEAN by different threat perceptions; regional "reintegration" of Vietnam; the divestiture of military hardware by Russia and Ukraine in order to raise capital; and the continued sale by China of nuclear and missile technology, as well as other arms and equipment.

It is into these uncertainties that the Pacific Command must navigate in order to support U.S. policy within the region. Some might argue that it is best for the U.S. to withdraw to "fortress America," but there are interests--trade, security agreements, regional access or transit rights--that require we remain engaged. If not, U.S. long term interests will suffer, if only because developments within the Pacific Rim region will affect relations globally. The U.S. will be unable to influence these developments at their root cause unless it is engaged to some degree. But to what degree? Domestic resources and political will certainly will not allow the U.S. to drive the international environment as it did during the Cold War. This is the subject for Part Two.

PART TWO

Enduring U.S. security interests in the Asia-Pacific region have been defined by the Department of Defense as protecting the U.S. and allies from attack; contributing to nuclear deterrence; preserving our political and economic access; maintaining regional stability; fostering the growth of democracy and human rights; deterring nuclear and conventional proliferation; and ensuring freedom of navigation.³²

Admiral Charles R. Larson, Commander-in-Chief, United States Pacific Command (PACOM), states the strategy for PACOM is "based on forward presence and robust military relationships with friends and allies. But the cornerstone of our successful strategy for regional peace and prosperity is a continued credible military presence."³³ Admiral Larson recognizes future U.S. growth "is tied to the Pacific basin," and that the U.S.-Japanese relationship is key to that region.³⁴ The U.S. cannot be the regional peacekeeper, however, but "we will be called upon as a guarantor, as leader of a coalition and, through military-to-military contacts, as an 'honest broker' in times of tension."³⁵ He further adds "we must continue to sustain active foreign military programs in-theater that will serve to enhance defense responsibility/sharing, force interoperability, collective/coalition defense capabilities and U.S. system acquisition."³⁶

PACOM's six principles for U.S. security policy in Asia are derived from policy guidance espoused by former Secretary of Defense Cheney during a visit to Tokyo on 22 November 1991. These

principles are: continued American engagement in the region; maintenance of strong bilateral and multilateral security arrangements; maintaining modest but capable forward deployed U.S. forces; maintaining sufficient overseas support structures for sustaining forward deployed forces and reinforcements when, where and if required; gaining greater security responsibility sharing by partners; and following deliberate policies of defense cooperation to achieve greater efficiencies and interoperability.³⁷ It is to these ends that PACOM efforts are directed.

The challenges facing PACOM in the Pacific Rim, as discussed in Part One, are many and varied. They include continued support of South Korea, maintenance of the Japanese alliance, regional stability and confidence building, nuclear non-proliferation and the reduction of conventional arms proliferation, freedom of the sea lanes, management of China's emergence as a blue water navy, continued diffusion of Russian capabilities, and enhancement of bilateral relations and interoperability throughout the region. Not all of these are "neat" military missions; like all theaters, the visible military threat is diminishing. What is likely to evolve once flashpoints have been reduced is the diplomatic use of military force to guarantee regional access, especially to markets, and protection of the region against hegemonic dominance--not at all unlike pre-World War II policy.

In the interim, PACOM has adjusted well to the shift away from pre-Cold War routine and its emphasis on forward basing to contain the threat of Soviet aggression. The loss of facilities in the

Philippines coincided nicely with the requirement to reduce force levels, although several of the training ranges there were difficult to replicate elsewhere. Forward presence is evident in continued operations throughout Northeast Asia, the ASEAN region--especially Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore--and adjacent countries such as Australia. It has alleviated some of these nations' concerns by demonstrating that the U.S. is not interested in permanent bases as much as routine access. This continued military presence reinforces relations with Pacific Rim nations, strengthens perceptions of U.S. regional commitments, legitimizes--through minimum demands--the U.S. role as "honest broker," provides access to facilities for interim operations, repair, upkeep and sustainment, allays regional concerns while enhancing stability, and solidifies bilateral familiarity as well as interoperability. Showing the flag in an unobtrusive manner engenders good will throughout the region as well as supports U.S. national interests. A further reduction in U.S. forces will most likely occur as the overt threat is reduced, and the since land that U.S. forces occupy is a contentious issue in some areas--on Okinawa, Japan, and Korea--there may even be calls from host countries for future withdrawals or consolidations. But at the same time there are increases in burden sharing: one-third the cost of maintaining U.S. forces (outside salaries) in Korea and 73 percent in Japan will be provided by the host countries by 1995.³⁸ In all, PACOM's strategy is achieving its goals.

The military presence in East Asia, including naval forces

afloat, was over 120,000 at the end of 1992.³⁹ U.S. forward presence, principally maritime, includes one forward deployed carrier battle group and a Marine Expeditionary Force stationed in Japan, and 2 to 3 USAF fighter wing equivalents in Korea and Japan. Plans to reduce US Army forces in South Korea (due to improvements in South Korean forces) to less than a division were interrupted by former Secretary Cheney because of the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons program.⁴⁰ Crisis response forces which are dedicated to the Pacific region are stationed in Hawaii, Alaska and the continental U.S. and include more than one division, one fighter wing, and five carrier battle groups and amphibious forces.⁴¹

The PACOM theater commander is unique among all theater Commander-in-Chiefs (CINCs), not only because of the size of his real estate, but also because he alone possesses what this writer considers true unity of command. Unlike the relationship that exists, for example, between Atlantic Command and European Command, the Pacific Commander "owns" the bases from which the troops and equipment originate, the water upon/over which they navigate, most of the combat platforms in which they transit, and the end state where they operate. This makes for a more "elegant" arrangement in planning than exists in the Atlantic. The blue water/continental seams evident in the Atlantic have been eliminated here. In the Pacific, responsibility for the concept of operations, employment of forces, and the conduct of operations from the continental U.S. to the threat rests with one commander.

But there are two drawbacks. First, due to its size--over 50 percent of the world's area--PACOM is certainly an economy of force theater. Assets are stretched thin, and this could have a significant impact on overall theater operations in time of conflict if contingencies in other theaters preclude assignment of supporting forces, or if subsequent force levels are reduced too greatly. Second, there is a critical seam that affects the viability of PACOM's future mission, and it exists between the political and military spheres.

National policy is beyond the scope of this paper, but I would be remiss by not emphasizing that any policy pursued by PACOM is fundamentally flawed without the enunciation of an overall U.S. national strategy toward the Pacific Rim. PACOM can prepare for the visible military threat as it exists today, plan for the threats as they are perceived tomorrow, and engage in the "gray" areas where the presence of military forces reinforces commitment and access, as well as U.S. influence in regional economic and diplomatic issues. All of this can and is being done at the theater CINC level (and above), but a failure at the national level to clearly identify and enunciate an overall regional strategy only creates a chasm between political policy and the military structure that should support it. A well defined and coherent national policy toward the Pacific Rim not only provides focus for military strategy in theater, but also enables and complements military efforts within the region and its influences in time of peace.

The consensus of many observers of U.S. policy is the Pacific

arena--despite the allocation of substantial resources--has traditionally taken a backseat to European policy. Many reasons abound for an inherent Eurocentric bias including: the strategic commitment to NATO vice a more unilateral approach in the Pacific theater; the heightened level of national attention and involvement leading a multilateral alliance brought to the European theater vice the Pacific; the major concentration of forces, equipment and effort poised against the Soviets in the European theater; natural cultural and historic ties to Europe and reinforced affinity through post World War II policies; and the relative closeness of Europe geographically when compared to the Pacific region.

As a result Asia has never been accorded the same priority as Europe.⁴² Past Asian policy has only been a derivative of a European based strategy--containment of the Soviet threat.⁴³ Even while the U.S. adapts to a post cold war Europe, relations with the Asia-Pacific region have been "put on hold."⁴⁴ "Beyond the occasional Pentagon study, there has been no effort to devise a comprehensive new strategy toward Asia...that looks beyond cold war assumptions."⁴⁵ The net result is today the military is the prime mover in establishing a regional framework.

This does not mean to imply there is no civilian attention. The purview of Richard H. Solomon, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, coincided nicely with that of Admiral Larson in this region. And Solomon's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee paralleled closely the viewpoints Admiral Larson presented to the Senate Armed Services

Committee.⁴⁶ But Solomon's perspectives do not necessarily translate to stated policy on the national level, and some were derived from the Defense Department's study on East Asia.⁴⁷ Because the strategy is militarily focused--i.e., military presence to maintain regional stability and ease fears of Japanese military resurgence--it is not necessarily integrated with economic policy.⁴⁸ This is not a defect in military planning, but a default by civilian planners. As Ellings and Olsen write,

the strength of America's current strategy in Asia is its emphasis, more stated than realized, on flexibility through the maintenance of an array of bilateral ties with Asian countries and on a preference for leading ad hoc coalitions...to meet threats. Undercutting the enlightened verbiage, however, is a failure to make Asia a priority--a failure to appreciate the gravity of the economic challenges posed by Asia.⁴⁹

The authors further state that the U.S. must recognize its enormous stake in Asia and "treat the region on its own terms, formulating a new strategy that assertively pursues U.S. economic competitiveness as well as a flexible coalition approach to regional security."⁵⁰

Why is this important? Because PACOM will have to respond to and act within the environment national policy creates--whether it be prompted by confidence building measures, arms control initiatives, economic/trading policies, or diplomatic overtures. Just as the theater commander must create the environment within which his operational commanders can successfully wage war, so must the national leadership create an environment wherein the theater commander can support the peace. A structurally chaotic

environment erodes the effectiveness of the military arm as a tool of statecraft in peacetime. This is undesirable because successful policies in peacetime may preempt or mitigate the need to transition from peace to war. There is no guarantee all friction would be reduced, but an unfocused national policy only leads to more. Properly adjusted, it allows the theater commander to establish priorities, create the optimum environment for his forces in both peace and war, link military-political-economic considerations in theater, and provide for unity of effort.

A redefined national strategy toward the Pacific Rim should not alter current PACOM strategy unless there is a concerted effort to withdraw from the region or redefine current U.S. roles within it. More likely than not, a renewed national approach would complement and facilitate current military efforts. The success of PACOM strategy is highly dependent upon its close integration with U.S. political objectives in theater, as well as close cooperation and assistance from senior diplomatic leadership. As Admiral Larson states, "our strategy of regional stability through multiple bilateral relationships depends heavily on a robust policy of security assistance."⁵¹

What should this new strategy entail? Again, the specifics of national policy are beyond the scope of this paper, but several initiatives which could influence the environment within which PACOM executes its strategy warrant discussion. First and foremost, the U.S. should shift from the role of a leader to that of a partner. The U.S. must promote a geopolitical balance within

the region and provide reassurance against uncertainty by acting as an "honest broker," as is being advocated in current PACOM strategy. The U.S. must not promote a balance of power in the context of past Soviet-U.S. relations. Not only may it be increasingly difficult to determine against whom one should balance, but implementation of a balance would erode the credibility of an honest broker and possibly lead to bipolar regional alignment. A bipolar alignment not only could retard continued political and economic maturity in some nations, but it might also commit the U.S. to a larger residual military force than desired.

Korea is key to the transition of U.S. strategy in Asia. The U.S. cannot draw back from a leadership role until the safety of the South is assured. Irrespective of treaty obligations, any altercation between the North and the South not only would draw the U.S. back in, but it would also be disruptive to the entire region and upset the stable geopolitical balance the U.S. seeks. Therefore, a resolution of Korea must be the first step of a new regional approach. This does not imply there must be reunification, but the following must occur: confidence building dialogue must continue between North and South Korea; the borders between the two countries must be demilitarized; and there must be a peaceful transfer of power to Kim Jong Il or his successor, should he not remain in power. Additionally, all avenues must be exhausted to discourage the proliferation of nuclear arms in the North. Not only would this upset arms stability as previously

and perhaps lead to further proliferation within the region, but it could also derail U.S. strategy by involving the U.S. in a nuclear guarantee it would not otherwise give in order to discourage further proliferation.

Second, the U.S. must renew and redefine its relationship with Japan. The U.S. and Japanese security treaty must stand, although it is a paradox that what was first created to protect Japan from an external threat is now perceived as a means to restrain Japanese military adventurism. But this works to Japan's advantage for it allays regional fears and distrust and facilitates a larger economic and political role.

The natural technoeconomic alliance that exists between the U.S. and Japan must be nurtured. Together the U.S. and Japan account for 40 percent of the world GNP and 85 percent of the cutting edge technology.⁵² Japan leads the U.S. in five critical technologies; the NATO countries none.⁵³ The cross investment between the two nations is "heavily concentrated in high growth, knowledge intensive sectors, with a major portion of it being research and service-trade related."⁵⁴ Rather than being "bashed," this symbiotic relationship must be fostered. The U.S. is the sole remaining superpower, but it is too draining on national resources to go it alone. Japan alone is not a superpower, and it is only through cooperation with the U.S. that it can fulfill its role as a regional power. This is beneficial to the U.S. because if the two nations "march together" the end result would be reduced U.S. investments, both economic and military, to maintain regional

interests.

Third, the United States must initiate a dialogue with the emerging Chinese leadership. Dialogue in no way connotes approval of internal policies, but China is the one major regional power with whom there are vast ideological differences. Establishing a foundation will be useful in the future given the high potential for regional disagreements. This does not imply the U.S. has to subordinate its interests to those of China. However, the U.S. should seek to avoid rifts with China that lead to bipolar regional alignment. A rift only derails U.S. regional strategy and it should not be allowed to occur unless the issue directly conflicts with U.S. national interests. This dialogue should also apply to military to military exchanges, a process begun in Hawaii in April 1989 with the first overseas visit ever by the PLA-Navy, but later terminated after the Tiananmen massacre.⁵⁵ Admiral William Crowe lauded the value of such interactions when reflecting upon his involvement with the Soviets as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs;⁵⁶ but, like security assistance, these contacts cannot exist without political support.

Fourth, the U.S. must be selective in choosing those countries whose relations it identifies as being in the national interest. Significant social and political progress has been required in many nations within the region due to economic growth. The U.S. should only support those regimes capable of absorbing the impact of change. The U.S. cannot afford to be aligned with nations who are resistant to that change; nor should it be the catalyst of change.

Finally, the United States should refrain from multilateral military alliances. PACOM's current strategy of bilateral exchanges and exercises is encouraged, as are measures to encourage regional nations to pursue security and other confidence measures. In no way should the U.S. attempt to develop ASEAN into a "mini" NATO. The ASEAN nations do not possess the regional identity necessary to transition to that framework. Bilaterally the U.S. has access to all ASEAN nations and that is the proper level for military interaction. In fact, this avenue serves U.S. interests by maintaining U.S. presence within the region and exercising freedom of navigation in all areas.

CONCLUSION

PACOM strategy today is at the proper level, but to remain robust in the future it requires support from above; that support being a clearly defined national strategy toward the region which incorporates, complements, assists, and empowers the military as an instrument of statecraft. Without it, military strategy in theater will not realize its maximum potential, and force structure--if haphazardly reduced--may not provide the necessary elements to support regional and national political objectives.

It is to be expected that the role of the military shifts in peacetime, and as peaceful solutions occur for many of the region's uncertainties, more forces will be withdrawn. But complete disengagement must not occur. Military presence through exercises and visits on bilateral levels and security assistance will always be effective diplomatic tools which serve as reminders of U.S. power, presence, interests, and commitments, as well as facilitating regional access. But these endeavors require close cooperation with U.S. political and diplomatic mechanisms to be effective; not only do these mechanisms facilitate military efforts, but, as U.S. presence is further reduced, other political measures must evolve to fill the "vacuum" where influence was previously exercised through military means. The U.S. does not need to control events, but it still has a very strong interest in influencing them. This is the challenge, and it requires coordinated military, political, and economic strategies.

ENDNOTES

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26. Robert A. Scalapino, "The United States and Asia: Future Prospects," Foreign Affairs, Winter 1991/1992, p. 21; "Northeast Asia - Prospects for Cooperation," The Pacific Review, no. 2, 1992, p. 102.
27. Xiaowei, p. 30.
28. Stephan W. Bosworth, "The United States and Asia," Foreign Affairs, Special Issue 1992, p. 114.
29. Ibid., pp. 119-120.
30. Thomas W. Robinson, "Modernization and Revolution in Post-Cold War Asia," Problems of Communism, January-April 1992, p. 173.
31. U.S. Department of Defense, p. 15.
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33. Charles R. Larson, "Uncertainties, Turbulence Head Concerns," Defense 92, July/August 1992, p. 40.
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35. Ibid., p. 41.
36. Ibid.
37. "Pacific Command Strategy," USCINCPACINST S3050.6A dtd 3 August 1992, p. I-4. Excerpts are UNCLAS.

38. U.S. Department of Defense, pp. 42-43.
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40. Ibid., p. 34.
41. Ibid.
42. Donald C. Hellmann, "The United States and Asia in an Age of International Upheaval," Current History, p. 401.
43. Richard J. Ellings and Edward A. Olsen, "A New Pacific Profile," Foreign Policy, Winter 1992/1993, p. 126.
44. Frank Gibney, The Pacific Century: America and Asia in a Changing World (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992), p. 536.
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46. See Richard H. Solomon, "Pursuing U.S. Objectives in Asia and the Pacific," U.S. Department of State Dispatch, April 6, 1992, pp. 272-277; "The Evolving Security Environment in the Asia-Pacific Region," U.S. Department of State Dispatch, November 4, 1991, pp. 818-820; and "U.S. Relations with East Asia and the Pacific," The DISAM Journal, Summer 1991, pp. 43-55. See also Charles R. Larson, "Geopolitical Trends in the Pacific," Vital Speeches of the Day, May 15, 1992, pp. 456-461.
47. The study cited is "A Strategic Framework for Asia: Looking to the 21st Century." It is not surprising that it would be cited, given it was the foundation for President Bush's report to Congress, and thus became administration policy. But again, this was a military report with military considerations as its thesis, and was unrelated to economic or other political strategies.
48. Ellings and Olsen, p. 127.
49. Ibid., pp. 129-130.
50. Ibid., p. 116.
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53. Cordesman, p. 35.
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55. This highly successful visit provided the PLA-N an important first hand exposure to U.S. viewpoints and culture. It also helped that Hawaii has a large population of Chinese descent which "opened their arms" to the visitors. When the Chinese ships departed Pearl Harbor many of the sailors manning the rails--both men and women--were in tears. It is unknown what effect the visit had on senior Chinese leadership.

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